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Department of State

INCOMING TELEGRAM

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ACTION ARA-15

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USINT HAVANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 KINGSTON 1019

E.O. 12065: GDS 2/5/80 (DUBOSE, R.) OR-P
TAGS: PINT, JM
SUBJECT: THE UPCOMING JAMAICAN ELECTION, FIRST THOUGHTS ON MECHANICS AND ISSUES

REF: KINGSTON

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER MANLEY HAS ANNOUNCED AN ELECTION, AND SAID THAT HE THOUGH THE ELECTORAL MACHINERY NOW BEING REVAMPED COULD BE IN PLACE IN TIME FOR AN OCTOBER VOTE. IN FACT, BOTH SIDES NOW SEEM TO BE INTERESTED IN AND WORKING TOWARDS AN EARLIER DATE. THE ELECTORAL REFORMS WILL EFFECT A MAJOR DIFFERENCE FROM TRADITIONAL PATTERNS, BUT THE FACTOR OF POSSIBLE INTIMIDATION IS WORRYING. AT THIS TIME ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT MANLEY WILL LOSE THE ELECTION, BUT WE SHOULD NOT COUNT HIM OUT AS HE HAS BEEN A BRILLIANT POLITICAL TACTICIAN. THE MAJOR ISSUE, VIRTUALLY FORCED BY THE SITUATION IS WHO CAN LEAD THE COUNTRY OUT OF THE ECONOMIC DEBACLE? THE PNP IS NOW DECIDING ON THE ROUTE IT BELIEVES THE COUNTRY SHOULD FOLLOW, PROBABLY A MIXED ECONOMY WITH A CUMBERSOME PUBLIC SECTOR, STRONG GOVERNMENT CONTROLS AND GREATER EFFORTS TOWARDS INDIVIDUAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY. SEAGA HAS TOLD US HE WILL CONCENTRATE ON THE CRITICAL ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR FOR JOB OPPORTUNITES AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNING CAPACITY. WHETHER MANLEY GOES MUCH FARTHER IN AROUSING CLASS AND NATIONALIST XENOPHOBIA, AS HE HAS DONE IN THE PAST, WILL DEPEND UPON HOW MUCH HE BELIEVES HE NEEDS TO IN ORDER TO GET THE POLITICAL SUPPORT HE WANTS. WHILE MANLEY CASTIGATES IMPERIALISM AND EMPHASIZES TIES WITH WHAT HE CALLS THE SOCIALIST WORLD, SEAGA WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO POINT THAT JAMAICA'S BEST HOE IS WITH THE US AND THE INDUSTRIALIZED DEMOCRACIES. END SUMMARY.

3. ON SUNDAY, JAN 3, PRIME MINISTER MANLEY ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD CALL ELECTIONS AS SOON AS THE ELECTORAL COMMITTEE COMPLETES THE REORGANIZATION OF ELECTORAL PROCEDURES. HE PLEDGED THAT HIS PARTY'S REPRESENTATIVES ON THE COMMITTEE WOULD WORK HARD TO COMPLETE THE WORK IN THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE TIME. HE REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES THAT THE ELECTION WOULD DECIDE THE FUTURE ECONOMIC STRATEGY OF JAMAICA, UT DID NOT CLARIFY THE STRATEGY WHICH THE PNP WILL ADOPT. WE OFFER HERE SOME THOUGHTS ON THE PUTATIVE ELECTION.

4. ELECTORAL REFORM. THE BIPARTISAN INTERIM ELECTORAL REFORM COMMITTEE, MANDATED BY ELGISLATION IMMEDIATELY AUGUST OF LAST YEAR, HAS BEEN HARD AT WORK TO COMPLETELY OVERHAUL THE ELECTORAL MACHINERY OF JAMAICA WHIC HAD BECOME BY THE TIME OF THE LAST ELECTION A "STINKING DISGRACE" (DAILY GLEANER) WHEREIN BALLOT STUFFING, BOGUS REGITRATION, INTIMIDATION, FRAUD OF VARIOUS KINDS WERE THE NROM. THE GOVERNING PEOPLE'S NATIONAL PARTY (PNP) RESISTED ELECTORAL REFORM AS LONG AS IT COULD, BUT OPPOSITION LEADER SEAGA PURSUED IT WITH SINGLE-MINDED VEHEMENCE. HE BOYCOTTED THE ELECTORAL PROCESS, REFUSING TO PARTICIPATE IN BY-ELECTIONS AND LEADING HIS PARTY'S SENATORS IN A TEMPORARY RESIGNATION, THUS STULTIFYING THE CONSTITUTIONAL WORKING OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM. PUSHED BY PUBLIC OPINION, MANLEY FINALLY GAVE IN, WITH AN AQUACIOUS ATTEMPT TO TAKE CREDIT FOR THE WHOLE PROCESS. EVEN THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED AND SOMETIME MOUTHPIECE NEWSPAPER DAILY NEWS, IN ITS 1979 REVIEW SUPPLEMENT, GAVE FULL CREDIT FOR ELECTORAL REFORM TO SEAGA AND NONE TO MANLEY. NOW, AFTER A SLOW START, THE REFORM PROCEDURES ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED WITH APPARENT ENERGY AND GOOD FAITH BY BOTH PARTIES UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE HIGHLY RESPECTED PROFESSOR GLADSTONE MILLS.

5. THE ELECTORAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE IS COMPOSED OF TWO MEMBERS APPOINTED BY THE PRIME MINISTER, TWO APPOINTED BY THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, THREE MEMBERS SELECTED BY THE FIRST FOUR APPOINTEES, AND A DIRECTOR OF ELECTIONS APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR GENERAL. IT MUST FIRST APPOINT RETURNING OFFICERS WHO ARE THE PRINCIPAL ORGANIZERS OF THE ELECTORAL MACHINERY IN THE SIXTY CONSTITUENCIES. IT IS NOT EASY TO FIND ACCEPTABLE CANDIDATES, GIVEN THE POLITICAL POLARIZATION. OTHER ELECTORAL OFFICIALS, ENUMERATORS, POLLWATCHERS, ETC. MUST BE APPOINTED. THEN THERE MUST BE AN ISLAND-WIDE REGISTRATION OF VOTERS--THE JLP IS INSISTING UPON REGISTRATION CARDS WITH PHOTOS. THERE ARE NO PRECEDENTS FOR SUCH AN EFFORT IN THIS YOUNG COUNTRY (FIRST ELECTIONS IN 1944), BUT A GOOD ESTIMATE WOULD BE SIX MONTHS. SINCE THE SUMMER MONTHS ARE CONSIDERED IMPRACTICAL FOR ELECTIONS BECAUSE OF SCHOOL HOLIDAYS, RECESS OF PARLIAMENT, THE GENERAL HOLIDAY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 KINGSTON 1019

SEASON. THE CONVENTIONAL APPROACH HERE WOULD MANDATE ELECTIONS IN THE FALL. MANLEY'S ESTIMATE OF OCTOBER SEEMS, THEREFORE, FAIR AND REALISTIC. HOWEVER, ONE EXPERIENCED JLP POLITICIAN TOLD US A BELIEVES MANLEY WILL GO FOR AN ELECTION IN MAY OR JUNE, USING THE NEW OFFICIALS BUT THE OLD VOTER LISTS. THIS POLITICIAN SAID THE JLP WOULD GRUMBLE BUT HAVE TO GO ALONG. HIS THEORY IS THAT MANLEY NEEDS THE ELECTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

6. IN THE EIGHT ELECTIONS HELD IN JAMAICA SINCE SELF-GOVERNMENT STARTED IN 1944, CERTAIN CONVENTIONS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED, BUT NONE ARE IN CONCRETE -- AS THE ELECTION REFORM MOVEMENT DEMONSTRATES. CANDIDATES ARE THEORETICALLY CHOSEN BY PARTY CONSENSUS IN EACH CONSTITUENCY, BUT IN PRACTICE THE CHOICE IS RATHER THOROUGHLY CONTROLLED BY THE "STANDING COMMITTEES" (I.E. SMALL GROUPS OF TOPS LEADERS IN BOTH PARTIES). BOTH PARTIES ALREADY HAVE ABOUT 2/3 OF THEIR CANDIDATES CHOSEN FOR THE 60 SEATS. THE JOP, FOR INSTANCE, ALREADY HAS FORTY "CARETAKERS" AND THE PNP 13 IN PLACE WHO AUTOMATICALLY BECOME CANDIDATES. ELECTIONEERING IS NOISY, BOISTEROUS, WITH A LOT OF GIMMICKS -- VERY MUCH IN THE US STYLEY, BUT WITH CONSIDERABLE VIOLENCE. ELABORATE ORGANIZATION, PARTICULARLY BY THE PNP, IS PURSUED ENERGETICALLY WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON GETTING OUT THE VOTE. DESPITE THE DESPERATE ECONOMIC SITUATION, WE UNDERSTAND THAT BOTH PARTIES HAVE SUFFICIENT WAR CHESTS, WITH THE PNP HAVING THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING ABLE TO USE GOVERNMENT MACHINERY, AND WITH CONTROL OF RADIO/TV AND VETO POWER OVER ONE OF THE TWO DAILY NEWSPAPERS. WE HEAR THAT MONEY IS NO PROBLEM FOR THE JLP, WHICH HAS THE IMAGE OF THE CERTAIN WINNER.

7. DESPITE POPULAR DISSATISFACTION WITH THE GOVERNMENT -- FEW GOVERNMENTS IN THE LAST EIGHT YEARS COULD HAVE HAD AS AS DISMAL A RECORD -- THE PNP CANNOT BE COUNTED OUT. IT HAS TWO BIG PLUSES LACKING TO THE JLP: (A) THE CHARISMA OF MICAHEL MANLEY (VERSUS THE ALMOST ANTI-CHARISMA OF SEAGA); (B) SUPERIOR ORGANIZATION RUN BY THE EXPERIENCED GENERAL SECRETARY O. K. DUNCAN.

8. WITH THE REFORM IN ELECTORAL PROCEDURES AND NEW OFFICIALS, THE BIGGEST SINGLE HANKY-PANKY FACTOR WILL BE THE POSSIBILITY OF INTIMIDATION AND FRAUD WITH OSSIBLE CONNIVANCE BY THE POLICE AND HOME GUARD. A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF INTIMIDATION IS TRADITIONAL, AND EXPECTED. THE JLP WILL NOT EVEN TRY IN TONY SPAULDING'S CONSTITUENCY, AND THE PNP WILL NOT VENTURE INTO SEAGA'S WEST KINGSTON STRONGHOLD. BUT THIS AFFECTS ONLY A FEW SEATS AND IS ABOUT A STANDOFF. HOWEVER WIDESPREAD USE OF THE POLICE AND HOME GUAD BY THE PNP HOLDS REAL DANGERS. IF D. K. DUNCAN DECIDES TO GO ALL THE WAY WITH INTIMIDATION AND FRAUD, HE HAS THE NECESSARY MUSCLE, AND HE COULD WIN THE ELECTION THAT WAY. BUT SEAGA HAS MADE IT PLAIN, AND HE IS SUPPORTED BY SHEARER, THAT THIS TIME AROUND (AS IN 1976) HE WOULD NOT ACCEPT AN ELECTION WON IN THAT MANNER. HE WOULD IMMEDITELY CLOSE DOWN THE ISLAND WITH MASSIVE DEMONSTRATIONS, AND HE HAS PROVEN HE CAN DO IT.

9. ISSUES. WE CAN ONLY GIVE A PRELIMINARY GUESS AT THIS EARLY STAGE, BUT MANLEY WILL PROBABLY RUN ON A PLANK CALLING FOR A MORE RESPONSIBLE ROLE BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR, THE IMPORTANCE OF JAMAICA CHANGING ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE IMF AND THE NECESSITY FOR MAINTAINING EMPLOYMENT LEVELS, PARTICULARLY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND SUBSIDIES. HE MAY ALSO PLAY AGAIN THE DRAGONS OF IMPERIALISM, AND THE CAPITALIST-ORIENTED POLICIES OF THE REACTIONARY JLP. IF HE DOES NOT OBTAIN THE IMF WAIVER AND THE ECONOMY DETERIORATES EVEN FASTER THAN WE NOW EXPECT, THE IMF WILL BE INCLUDED AS ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL IMPERIALIST ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE. HE CERTAINLY CANNOT RUN ON THE GOVERNMENT'S RECORD. MANLEY WILL TRY HARD TO TWITCH CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS, OR RATHER CLASS RESENTMENT-- THE "PEOPLE" AGAINST THE BIG MEN, SOCIALISM AGAINST CAPITALISM, LIBERATION AGAINST IMPERIALISM, ETC. HE HAS USED THE GAMBIT BEFORE WITH SUCCESS. IN THIS HE RUNS THE DANGER OF BECOMING CAPTIVE OF THE FAR LEFT RADICALS AND COMMUNISTS, ALIENATING THEMODERATE TRADITIONAL MAJORITY IN HIS OWN PARTY. ALREADY COMMUNIST LEADER TREVOR MUNROE HAS SOUNDED THE THEME. IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION OF FEB 4, HE SAID THE ELECTION ISSUES ARE SIMPLE: "THE PEOPLE VS THE IMF." WHETHER MANLEY HIMSELF WILL SEIZE THIS THEME AND GO ALL THE SAY, WE CANNOT SAY AT THIS TIME. HE HIMSELF HAS SAID THE ELECTION IS PRIMARILY A CHOICE BETWEEN ECONOMIC STRATEGIES.

10. THE JLP HAS A CORNUCOPIA OF THEMES. SEAGA WILL INEVITABLY FOCUS ON THE CLASSIC CHUCK-THE-RASCALS-OUT BECAUSE THEY HAVE FAILED. HE HAS TOLD US HE WILL EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF SAVING AND EXPANDING JOBS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR. HE CAN PROMISE BREAD ON THE TABLE, WHICH THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT PLAUSIBLY PROMISE.

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11. FOREIGN AFFAIRS WILL BE MOSTLY ANCILLARY . JLP POLICY IS TO POINT TO OUR POTENTIAL AS A SOURCE OF INVESTMENT AND AS A MARKET TO RAISE JAMAICA'S STANDARD OF LIVING AND AS A COUNTRY WITH WHICH JAMAICA HAS STRONG TIES BASED ON SIMILAR GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS AND MUTUAL ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES. ALTHOUGH MANLEY WILL PROBABLY NOT BE CRITICAL OF CUBA AND THE USSR, GOOD WORKDS ABOUT THEM WILL NOT WIN MANY VOTES, ESPECIALLY AFTER AFGHANISTAN. MANLEY CAN BE EXPECTED TO MAKE SOME MENTION OF HIS FRIENDSHIP WITH PRESIDENT CARTER, AMBASSADOR YOUNG, ETC. THIS MIGHT, ON THE SURFACE, SEEM A CONTRADICTION IF MANLEY'S PARTY IS AT THE SAME TIME RUNNING AGAINST THE IMF AND IMPERIALISM, BUT TO MANLEY THERE IS NO CONTRADICTION. SEAGA, THE OTHER HAND, WILL HARP ON MALEY'S RECORD OF COZINESS WITH CUBA AND THE EAST AND WILL INSIST THAT HIS PARTY IS THE TRUE FRIEND OF THE US. HUGH SHEARER WILL BE CRUCUAL IN THIS EFFORT AS MOST JAMAICANS BELIEVE HS IS EXTRAORDINARILY CLOSE TO AND INFLUENTIAL WITH IMPORTANT AMERICANS. EVERYONE WILL LOOK FOR "SIGNALS" OF USG SUPPORT, AND MANELY WILL BE ULTRA SENSITIVE TO ANYTHING HE COULD SEE AS SUPPORT FOR SEAGA, NOT SURPRISING IN VIEW OF SOME OF THE THINGS MANLEY HAS SAID ABOUT US. WE HAVE HAD A COMPLAINT FROM ONE MEMBER OF THE JLP ABOUT AN ANNOUNCEMENTOF THE FY 1980 PL-480 PROGRAM, WHICH BY COINCIDENCE WAS ANNOUNCED ON FEBRUARY 4 AMID THE ELECTION FURORE AND WAS GIVEN MOST UNUSUAL ATTENTION BYTHE GOVERNMENT MEDIA. BEYOND THE US ISSUE, THERE WILL BE TALK OF NON-AOGNMENT, NIEO, ETC., BUT THESE ISSUES ARE OFLITTLE INTEREST TO THE JAMAICAN POPULACE, AND THE POLITICIANS KNOW IT.

12. IN OTHER TELEGRAMS WE WILL ASSESS THE ROLE OF MINOR PARTIES, THE ROLE OF HUGH SHEARER AND THE BITU, THE PROSPECTS OF A JLP GOVERNMENT, AND ECONOMIC FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ELECTION. IN THIS INITIAL CUT WE POINT OUT:
--THE ELECTION DATE IS STILL UNCERTAIN, BUT BOTH SIDES SEEM TO WANT IT AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.
-- ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE JLP WILL SWEEP INTO POWER IN A FAIR ELECTION, BUT WE ARE UNEASY WITH SUCH A FACILE PREDICTION, KNOWING MANLEY'S POLITICAL TALENT.
-- ANNOUNCING AN ELECTION DOES NOT BY ANY MEANS DEFUSE THE FORCES AND PRESSURES THAT HAVE BEEN BUILDING UP HERE FOR A LONG TIME, AND WE COULD HAVE TROUBLE BEFORE THE ELECTION.
--SHAKY AS THE SITUATION IS, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THIS 18-YEAR-OLD COUNTRY STILL HOLD, AND THAT IS NOT AN INCONSIDERABLE ACHIEVEMENT.
--POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND FRAUD ARE PRACTICALLY A TRADITION HERE. AND THE POTENTIAL FOR THEM WILL INCREASE AS WE APPROACH THE ELECTION DATE. ELECTIONS IN JAMAICA HAVE BECOME A WINNER-TAKE-ALL CONTEST.
LAWRENCE

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